# Accelerating Access to Care
**February 25, 2015**

*The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), through an initiative launched in May 2014, has accelerated access to care for Veterans across the country, both in VA facilities and in their communities.*

Nationally, VA has completed more than 37 million appointments between May 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014. This represents an increase of 1.8 million more appointments than were completed during the same time period in 2013.

Facilities across the country have held **extended clinic hours** in the evenings and on weekends.
- From June 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014, VA completed over 880,000 appointments during extended hours clinics operated during evenings and on weekends.

Under provisions of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 and other programs, VA medical centers are able to authorize **non-VA medical care** for Veterans to reduce wait times and offer care to Veterans in their communities.
- VA made over 2 million authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector from May 1, 2014 through February 1, 2015. This represents a 45% increase in authorizations, when compared to the same period in the previous years.

VA has **cut wait times** and completed appointments in a timely manner
- VA completed 98% of appointments in December 2014 within 30 days of the date the Veteran preferred date.

VA has **increased recruiting and hiring** across the country
- From April 1, 2014, to January 31, 2015, VHA hired 31,502 employees with a net increase of 8,804 employees.
- The net increase in employees includes 917 new physicians, 2,043 nurses and 1,416 medical support assistants.

VA has **increased transparency** related to access
- At the direction of then Acting Secretary Gibson, starting in July 2014, VA has posted regular updates to the patient access data at: http://www.va.gov/health/access-audit.asp. These data updates enhanced transparency and provided information to Veterans and the public on Veterans access to quality health care.

**Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) Access Improvements:**
- Between May 1, 2014, and January 31, 2015, 30,286 authorizations for non-VA care were provided to Veterans enrolled at PVAHCS, an 80% increase in the number of authorizations over the same time period one year earlier.
- From May 1, 2014, to December 31, 2014, PVAHCS completed more than 420,000 Veteran appointments.